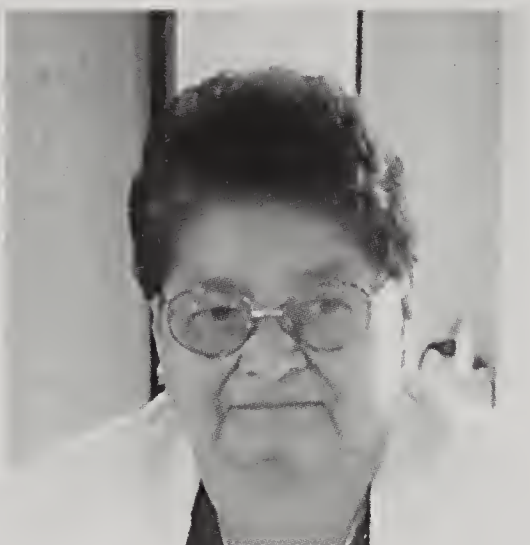


Diabetes and Your Feelings



Indian Health Service Division of
Diabetes Treatment and Prevention



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**“It blew me over.
I couldn’t eat.
I felt like I
was choking.
I thought
I would die
if I ate.”**

Feelings and diabetes

You are told that you have diabetes.

From that moment, your feelings may change. Many times these feelings hurt, and you wonder if you will ever get back to feeling good again.

Many people with diabetes say that you can feel good again. However, most of them did not start out feeling that way. Many of them felt upset when they first heard they had diabetes.

You, too, may be feeling upset about learning you have diabetes. You are not alone.

This booklet can help you see that diabetes does not have to remain a “downer.” You can feel good while having diabetes.

“You have diabetes”

What did you think when you first heard those words?

Some thoughts others have had are:

- “I’ll never be well again.”
- “I can’t do things freely like I used to.”
- “People will think of me as a sick person.”

One of the first things to do when you hear you have diabetes is to check out what you are thinking. It will be helpful for you to know that your diabetes will not be the same as it was for others you may know.

We know more about diabetes now. Your chances are better for good blood sugar control. Better blood sugar control means less chance for problems with your eyes, feet, heart and kidneys.

**“I thought,
‘Oh no!
What am I
going to do?
How will I
live with
this?’”**





**“For years I
thought I was
borderline.
I finally asked my
doctor, ‘Do I
have it or not?’
I learned that I
do have diabetes.”**

Shock!

Some people may try to deny they have diabetes by saying something like:

- “No! It’s not true!”
- “I can’t have a disease. I feel well most of the time.”
- “I’m only borderline. It’s not like I really have diabetes.”

It’s okay to feel unsure about your diabetes. Talk to people about diabetes.

Find out what new things have been learned. You may be thinking it’s worse or milder than it really is.

**“All I could
think of was
losing a leg
or my eyesight,
or going
on dialysis.”**



Fear!

Some people are afraid when they first hear they have diabetes. They may feel like saying:

- “What does this mean for my life?”
- “Will I be able to do the things I enjoy?”
- “Will my family and friends understand?”

Diabetes is a serious problem. It requires change. Fear can cause you to run away from the problem, and fight against change.

Fear about diabetes can also be helpful. Fear can help you seek out the facts and answers. Knowing about diabetes and blood sugar control will help you. You can avoid the dangers of diabetes.

Anger!

Some people feel angry. They may feel like saying:

- “Why me? I don’t deserve this!”
- “God is unfair!”
- “Why do I have to change the way I’ve always done things?!”

Anger is healthy and normal when diabetes comes into your life. You don’t want it. You don’t expect it. And, you feel like you don’t deserve it.

The best thing you can do with anger is to use it. Anger is raw energy. Getting busy and active may be helpful.

Sometimes you may just want to cry. Crying is one way to express anger, and can also help you feel better.



**“At first,
I was angry,
angry at myself.
I didn’t want
to change
my habits.”**

Guilt!

People with diabetes often feel guilty. They may feel like saying:

- “If I just hadn’t eaten so much, I wouldn’t have diabetes.”
- “I should have taken better care of myself.”
- “I should have walked today.”

Of all feelings, guilt may be the least helpful. It does little good to blame yourself or to focus on the past.

It is more helpful to accept and learn from your mistakes. You can avoid making the same kind of mistakes in the future.

**“I never accepted
diabetes until a
few years ago.
Before, I was
ashamed.
I felt like I had
neglected my
health.”**





**“I busted out
bawlin’, and I
bawled all day.
I knew diabetes
would be with me
my whole life.”**

Sadness!

If you are sad, you may feel like saying:

- “I feel so alone. No one understands.”
- “I feel like just sitting and doing nothing.”
- “I feel like giving up. Why try? I can’t make all those changes.”

Feeling sad about diabetes can get you to start thinking. It also may be a sign that “feeling good” again is just around the corner.

You may have gone through denial, fear and anger, and are now starting to accept the fact that you really do have a problem.

You can begin to look at diabetes for what it is -- a problem. You have solved other problems in the past. As a result, you have become a stronger, more able person.

You can do the same with diabetes.

**“At first
I was hurt and
in denial.
I still feel scared,
and wish I
didn’t have it.
But, I talk
with other people
who have diabetes.
Talking helps.”**



Talking helps

Try to find out which feelings you are having. Talk about them. Give them a name. Say, “I’m angry.” “I’m afraid.” “I’m feeling guilty.”

Talking about your feelings will help you better understand them.

Accepting diabetes

In time, you may learn to accept your diabetes.

You may feel like saying:

- “I don’t always like watching how much food I eat, but I know I will feel better when I do.”
- “I have some special people in my life and I want to enjoy them as long as I can.”
- “I will become well again and stay well. I can enjoy the rest of my life more if I am well.”



**“I quit
drinking beer,
and started doing
more sports.
My friends and
family tell me
I look healthier,
no more dark
circles under
my eyes.”**

Handling your feelings

When feelings get hard to handle, try to find out if it is your diabetes or other problems which may be causing a change in your feelings. Some questions you might ask are:

- “Is my diabetes out of control? If so, what caused it? Have I changed my food? My activity? Am I ill?”
- “Am I having problems at home? At work?”

How you feel matters a lot in diabetes care. Accept your feelings as normal and okay. Feelings are part of our body’s alarm systems. They are not wrong.

**“I strive to
be peaceful.
If I get irritated,
I just go outside.
I do some kind of
physical activity.”**





“Having diabetes gives me a reason to stay active, to get up early, feed the cattle, move hay around, walk the fields.”

Feeling good while having diabetes

Can a person feel good while having diabetes?
Is this really something to hope for?

Yes! Many people really do feel good while having diabetes. Knowing about diabetes and blood sugar control will help you.

Feeling good means getting in control of your blood sugar. Better blood sugar control means less chance for problems with your eyes, feet, heart and kidneys.

“I’m in control”

People feel better about diabetes when they find out what it takes to control their blood sugar.

They find out that they can make the daily choices needed to keep their blood sugar in control.

They learn to enjoy good foods and a more active life. Their energy returns. Self-confidence is better. After a few months, they feel stronger.

“My eating habits haven’t changed much, just gotten a little better. Now, I skip the french fries and double burgers.”





“At first I was scared. But now I walk and take my insulin every day. I dance with the Pottery Dancers. I’m passing on the dancing to my daughters.”

Diabetes is only a part of you

Feeling good about diabetes comes from seeing diabetes as only a part of you.

Persons who feel good while having diabetes learn to say, “I have diabetes. It is a part of me.”

They say, “I can still do the things that are special to me. I can still love, laugh, sing and play. I can still learn, work and make good decisions.”

“I can still reach the goals I set for myself.”

**“I have accepted
my diabetes.
I believe in
laughter, humor,
tolerance and
acceptance.”**



Feel good by becoming aware of inner self

Persons with diabetes feel good when they become aware of their inner selves.

Diabetes, like other illnesses, may cause persons to come face-to-face with the fact that their bodies do not last forever.

Some persons become more aware of their inner selves -- the self that does not change with poor health -- the self that is always worthy of the best care that can be given.

They know that nothing that happens now, or in the future, can change the real self. They learn to find peace and strength. They regain a freedom which cannot be taken away.

Feel good by learning balance

Persons with diabetes feel good when they learn to balance their lives.

They accept that their bodies are a part of nature. They learn to eat no more than their bodies will use in a day's time. They find ways to get more active and use up more energy every day.

They learn to walk in the balance of nature.



“I walk in the morning, and look at the mountains. It’s so beautiful.”

Feel good by helping others

Many people with diabetes want to help others. They want others to know that they, too, can control their blood sugar and feel good again. They also help family members to make good choices. Families can support changes for better health.

You, too, will find a way to feel good. Your feelings about diabetes may be mixed at first. But as you learn to accept all of your feelings, you begin to feel better about your diabetes. And, you will be able to help others learn about diabetes.

Talk with your health care provider. Your health care provider can help you learn how to cope with your feelings about diabetes.

**“I collect Elvis,
spend time with
my grandchildren,
and volunteer for
the tribe. I’m 71.
I have diabetes,
and I feel
great!”**



Notes

Sincere thanks go to the many people who appear in this booklet. They generously shared their stories about diabetes, and allowed photographs to be taken to help others who have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes.



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